

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
POLICY PLANNING STAFF

May 9, 1959

MEMORANDUM THE SECRETARY

Subject: Moscow's Telegram No. 1775 of March 9, 1959

The more S/P studies the attached telegram, the more significant and provocative we find it. In the event that you did not have an opportunity to give it full consideration last March, you may wish to read it again. Its principal points and S/P's comments thereon are set forth in the following paragraphs.

1. Leadership Attitudes: Embassy Moscow believes that Khrushchev and his closest colleagues are so convinced communism will triumph without war that they are prepared to compete peacefully; the Embassy considers that this gives the West an opportunity.

Comment: Looking back on the last ten years encompassing Russia's economic recovery, the communization of China, sputnik, etc. and considering the mentality of the Soviet leaders, they may well hold the conviction ascribed to them. Their confidence has been persistently voiced in Soviet public statements. We see deeper influences working that convince us they are wrong, but we can understand their thinking as they do. Our opportunity lies in exploiting the Soviet confidence in order that the free and communist systems may undergo the tests of time and comparison. We believe that the Kremlin's attitude results from a basic miscalculation of the relative drawing power of communism as opposed to that of a free society, and that in peaceful competition freedom will prevail. Were the Soviet leaders convinced, on the other hand, that their aims could be achieved only through force, the opportunity would be lacking, and an arms race culminating in total war could easily result.

④ 2. Evolutionary Process: The Embassy has witnessed a continuing evolution in the Soviet Union, and characterizes it as "tremendous". The Soviet masses are said to be losing their ideological fervor, and the leadership already out of touch with them. The view is expressed that our best chance of peaceful solutions to international disputes

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S/P - Gerard C. Smith

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lies in the continuance of such evolution until a different leadership comes to power, and that all our major policies should consequently be examined in the light of their contribution to Soviet evolution.

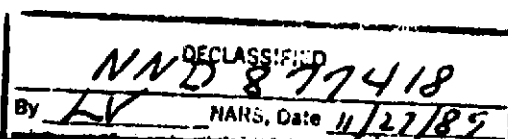
Comment: The process under reference has been described by too many competent observers to be seriously questioned; and the more recent and comprehensive the contacts with Soviet society, the stronger the impression of evolution appears to be. To disagree with this evaluation on the basis of communist dogma or experience in early post-war years would be to downgrade current realities. It also seems axiomatic that a different leadership will come to power -- since men are mortal -- and that it is bound to reflect the environment from which it springs. If evolution had produced a more "normal" society, it should be far easier to agree on peaceful settlements with leaders who reflected that society. Should the evolution be interrupted and a reversion to the xenophobia of Stalinism take place, or even should the present era of tension and balance of terror persist and new leaders reproduce the characteristics of the present leadership, peaceful solutions would logically be less likely and total war more so. The case made for examination of our major policies from the standpoint of their contribution to Soviet evolution is thus strong. However -- as the Embassy would doubtless be the first to admit -- it would seem essential not to overweight this factor. As an extreme example, unilateral disarmament might "contribute to evolution", but clearly at the cost of unacceptable risks. Protection of national security through adequate military power would still seem overriding; contributing to Soviet evolution should receive high priority in US policy formulation but cannot be the ultimate determinant.

3. Disarmament: The Embassy considers that, "though it may sound dreamy", there is a genuine possibility that Khrushchev would agree to comprehensive disarmament with full controls and inspection, and might even propose such a program. It is suggested that this approach may be worth serious consideration by the West, both as an alternative to total war and because communism as it now exists could not live long in the atmosphere that would follow such a development.

Comment: The suggestion is radical, and sounds utopian. Nevertheless, Khrushchev has himself hinted at it in general terms, and the British Defense Minister has made similar proposals. Serious study of such a program, involving a

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minuscule investment of effort compared to military expenditures, might produce very enlightening results as to practicality; and as an alternative to destruction the Embassy's suggestion may warrant attention.

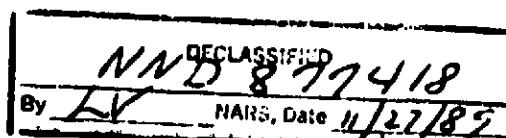
4. The German Problem: The Embassy feels that Western proposals on Germany, to date, would give such a heavy balance of political, military and strategic advantage to the West as to preclude Soviet acceptance, and that they consequently cannot serve as a basis for successful negotiation. A breakdown of negotiations is believed likely to produce a separate Soviet-East German peace treaty, followed by a hardening of the boundary between antagonistic power blocs in Europe, retardation of the evolutionary process within the USSR and greatly increased chances of total war through eventual German irredentism or simply heightened East-West antagonism. Progress toward unification through some type of federal relationship between the two Germanys is suggested as offering hope of keeping the situation fluid, slowing down East Germany's integration into the Soviet empire and making it easier for the Soviets eventually to agree to, or at least refrain from going to war over, German reunification.

Comment: The improbability of any settlement based on present positions of either side seems obvious. It would be hard to find a competent Western observer who sincerely expects the Soviets to agree to a united, sovereign, well-armed and militantly anti-Communist Germany as an integral member of a Western military alliance. The predictions advanced by the Embassy in the event of a breakdown in negotiations are open to more doubt. The future is innately opaque, few trends entirely irreversible, and the chain of events foreseen may not develop with the degree of certainty expressed. Yet it must be admitted that this chain of events would be more likely if no German settlement is reached and our goal of the retraction of Soviet power behind Russian frontiers indefinitely postponed. The Embassy's recommendation that we should attempt to avert these developments is thus hardly debatable. Whether progress toward federalization would provide an answer is certainly open to question but does warrant continued serious consideration.

5. Berlin: The Embassy believes the Soviets are quite serious in their intention of somehow reducing the irritation now produced by West Berlin and of strengthening the position of East Germany as a separate though obedient satellite, in the absence of acceptable alternatives. It believes that the

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Soviets do not want war, but that miscalculation is possible. It also believes, however, that a satisfactory compromise on Berlin can probably be achieved. It is consequently felt that, while the West should permit no interference with presence or access, arrangements based on practical considerations are preferable to willingness to engage in war over technical issues. Such arrangements should tend to inhibit later harassment of German civilian access, reduce risks of war by miscalculation, and assure the West of wider support should force eventually be necessary.

Comment: This point touches on a question so exhaustively debated in recent weeks that it seems pointless to recapitulate the evidence. It is interesting, however, to note the conclusion produced by direct, continuing personal contact with the Soviet leadership and atmosphere.

*[Handwritten Signature]*  
OFFICE C. Smith

Attachment:

Moscow's Telegram No. 1773  
of March 9, 1959.

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